



N • A • C • H •

May 18, 2001

The Honorable John Dingell
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Dingell:

On behalf of the National Association of Children's Hospitals (N.A.C.H.), which represents over 100 children's hospitals nationwide, I want to express our strong support for your introduction of the "FamilyCare Act of 2001."

As providers of care to all children, regardless of their economic status, children's hospitals devote more than 40% of their patient care to children who rely on Medicaid or are uninsured, and more than three-fourths of their patient-care to children with chronic and congenital conditions. These hospitals have extensive experience in assisting families to enroll eligible children in Medicaid and SCHIP. They are keenly aware of the importance of addressing the challenges that states face in enrolling this often hard to reach population of eligible children.

In particular, N.A.C.H. appreciates your efforts to simplify and coordinate the application process for SCHIP and Medicaid, as well as to provide new tools for states to use in identifying and enrolling families. We strongly support your provision guaranteeing continuous 12-month eligibility for children and parents, which will address one major problem in assuring coverage for eligible children.

N.A.C.H. also applauds your provisions that continue children's coverage as the first priority of the SCHIP program, including 1) requiring states to first cover children up to 200% of poverty and eliminating waiting lists in the SCHIP program before covering parents, and 2) requiring every child who loses coverage under Medicaid or SCHIP to be automatically screened for other avenues of eligibility and if found eligible, enrolled immediately in that program.

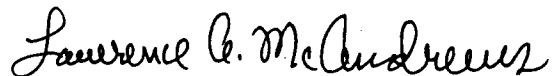
N.A.C.H. further supports your legislation's provision to give states additional flexibility under SCHIP and Medicaid to cover legal immigrant children. In states with high proportions of uninsured children, such as

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California, Texas and Florida, the federal government's bar on coverage of legal immigrant children helps contribute to the fact that Hispanic children represent the highest rate of uninsured children of all major racial and ethnic minority groups. Your provision to ensure coverage of legal immigrant children would be extremely useful in improving this situation.

N.A.C.H. greatly appreciates your efforts to provide all children with the best possible chance at starting out and staying healthy. We welcome and look forward to working with you to pass the "FamilyCare Act of 2001."

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lawrence A. McAndrews".

Lawrence A. McAndrews

Cc: Amy Droskoski, Energy and Commerce Committee